

THE

METHODIST MAGAZINE.

FOR AUGUST, 1818.

DIVINITY.

EVIDENCES OF THE TRUTH OF THE CHRISTIAN REVELATION.

Extracted from the new Edinburgh Encyclopædia.

(Continued from page 248.)

86. **B**UT why then, says the infidel, did they not all believe? Had the miracles of the gospel been true, we do not see how human nature could have held out against an evidence so striking and so extraordinary; nor can we at all enter into the obstinacy of that belief which is ascribed to the majority of the Jewish people, and which led them to shut their eyes against a testimony, that no man of common sense, we think, could have resisted?

87. Many Christian writers have attempted to resolve this difficulty, and to prove that the infidelity of the Jews, in spite of the miracles which they saw, is perfectly consistent with the known principles of human nature. For this purpose they have enlarged, with much force and plausibility, on the strength and inveteracy of the Jewish prejudices—on the bewildering influence of religious bigotry upon the understanding of men—on the woeful disappointment which Christianity offered to the pride and interests of the nation—on the selfishness of the priesthood—and on the facility with which they might turn a blind and fanatical multitude, who had been trained, by their earliest habits, to follow and to revere them.

88. In the gospel history itself, we have a very consistent account at least of the Jewish opposition to the claims of our Saviour. We see the deeply wounded pride of a nation, that felt

itself disgraced by the loss of its independence. We see the arrogance of its peculiar and exclusive claims to the favour of the Almighty. We see the anticipation of a great prince, who was to deliver them from the power and subjection of their enemies. We see their insolent contempt for the people of other countries, and the foulest scorn, that they should be admitted to an equality with themselves in the honours and benefits of a revelation from heaven. We may easily conceive, how much the doctrine of Christ and his apostles was calculated to gall, and irritate, and disappoint them ; how it must have mortified their national vanity ; how it must have alarmed the jealousy of an artful and interested priesthood ; and how it must have scandalized the great body of the people, by the liberality with which it addressed itself to all men, and to all nations, and raised to an elevation with themselves, those whom the firmest habits and prejudices of their country had led them to contemplate under all the disgrace and ignominy of outcasts.

89. Accordingly we know, in fact, that bitterness, and resentment, and wounded pride, lay at the bottom of a great deal of the opposition which Christianity experienced from the Jewish people. In the New Testament history itself, we see repeated examples of their outrageous violence, and this is confirmed by the testimony of many other writers. In the history of the martyrdom of Polycarp, it is stated, that the Gentiles and Jews inhabiting Smyrna, in a furious rage, and with a loud voice, cried out, "This is the teacher of Asia, the father of the Christians, the destroyer of our gods, who teacheth all men not to sacrifice, nor to worship them !" They collected wood, and the dried branches of trees, for his pile ; and it is added, "the Jews also, according to custom, assisting with the greatest forwardness." It is needless to multiply testimonies to a point so generally understood. That it was not conviction alone which lay at the bottom of their opposition to the Christians ; that a great deal of passion entered into it ; and that their numerous acts of hostility against the worshippers of Jesus, carry in them all the marks of fury and resentment.

90. Now we know that the power of passion will often carry it very far over the power of conviction. We know that the strength of conviction is not in proportion to the quantity of evidence *presented*, but to the quantity of evidence *attended to*, and perceived, in consequence of that attention. We also know, that

attention, is, in a great measure, a voluntary act, and that it is often in the power of the mind, both to turn away its attention from what would land it in any painful or humiliating conclusion, and to deliver itself up exclusively to those arguments which flatter its taste and its prejudices. All this lies within the range of familiar and every day experience. We all know how much it ensures the success of an argument, when it gets a *favourable* hearing. In by far the greater number of instances, the parties in a litigation are not merely each *attached* to their own side of the question; but each *confident and believing* that theirs is the side on which the justice lies. In these contests of opinion, which take place every day betwixt man and man, and particularly if passion and interest have any share in the controversy, it is evident to the slightest observation, that though it might have been selfishness, in the first instance, which gave a peculiar direction to the understanding, yet each of the parties often comes, at last, to entertain a sincere conviction in the truth of his own argument. It is not that truth is not one and immutable. The whole difference lies in the observers, each of them viewing the object through the medium of his own prejudices, or cherishing those peculiar habits of attention and understanding to which taste or inclination had disposed him.

91. In addition to all this, we know that though the evidence for a particular truth be so glaring, that it forces itself upon the understanding, and all the sophistry of passion and interest cannot withstand it, yet, if this truth be of a very painful and humiliating kind, the obstinacy of man will often dispose him to resist its influence, and, in the bitterness of his malignant feelings, to carry a hostility against it, and that too in proportion to the weight of the argument which may be brought forward in its favour.

92. Now, if we take into account the inveteracy of the Jewish prejudices, and reflect how unpalatable and how mortifying to their pride must have been the doctrine of a crucified Saviour, we believe that their conduct, in reference to Christianity and its miraculous evidences, presents us with nothing anomalous or inexplicable, and that it will appear a possible and a likely thing to every understanding, that has been much cultivated in the experience of human affairs, in the nature of man, and the science of its character and phenomena.

93. There is a difficulty, however, in the way of this investigation. From the nature of the case, it bears no resemblance to any thing else, that has either been recorded in history, or has come within the range of our own personal observation. There is no other example of a people called upon to renounce the darling faith and principles of their country, and that upon the authority of miracles exhibited before them. All the experience we have about the operation of prejudice, and the perversion of the human temper and understanding, cannot afford a complete solution of the question. In many respects, it is a case *sui generis*, and the only creditable information which we can obtain, to enlighten us in this enquiry, is through the medium of that very testimony upon which the difficulty in question has thrown the suspicion that we want to get rid of.

94. Let us give all the weight to this argument of which it is susceptible, and the following is the precise degree in which it affects the merits of the controversy. When the religion of Jesus was promulgated in Judea, its first teachers appealed to miracles wrought by themselves in the face of day, as the evidence of their being commissioned by God. Many adopted the new religion upon this appeal, and many rejected it. An argument in favour of Christianity is derived from the conduct of the first. An objection against Christianity is derived from the conduct of the second. Now, allowing that we are not in possession of experience enough for estimating, in *absolute terms*, the strength of the objection, we propose the following as a solid and unexceptionable principle, upon which to estimate a comparison betwixt the strength of the objection and the strength of the argument. We are sure that the first would not have embraced Christianity, had its miracles been false; but we are not sure beforehand, whether the second would have rejected this religion, on the supposition of the miracles being true. If experience does not enlighten us as to how far the exhibition of a real miracle would be effectual in inducing men to renounce their old and favourite opinions, we can infer nothing decisive from the conduct of those who still kept by the Jewish religion. This conduct was a matter of uncertainty, and any argument which may be extracted from it cannot be depended upon. But the case is widely different with that party of their nation, who were converted from Judaism to Christianity. We know that the alleged miracles of Christianity were perfectly open to examina-

tion. We are sure, from our experience of human nature, that in a question so interesting, this examination would be given. We know, from the very nature of the miraculous facts, so remote like every thing from what would be attempted by jugglery, or pretended to by enthusiasm, that, if this examination were given, it would fix the truth or falsehood of the miracles. The truth of these miracles, then, for any thing we know, may be consistent with the conduct of the Jewish party ; but the falsehood of these miracles, from all that we do know of human nature, is not consistent with the conduct of the Christian party. Granting that we are *not sure* whether a miracle would force the Jewish nation to renounce their opinions, all that we can say of the conduct of the Jewish party is, that we are not able to explain it. But there is one thing that we *are sure* of. We are sure, that if the pretensions of Christianity be false, it never could have forced any part of the Jewish nation to renounce their opinions, with its alleged miracles so open to detection, and its doctrines so offensive to every individual. The conduct of the Christian party, then, is not only what we are able to explain, but we can say with certainty, that it admits of no other explanation, than the truth of that hypothesis which we contend for. We may not know in how far an attachment to existing opinions will prevail over an argument which is felt to be true ; but we are sure, that this attachment will never give way to an argument which is perceived to be false ; and particularly when danger and hatred, and persecution, are the consequences of embracing it. The argument for Christianity, from the conduct of the first proselytes, rests upon the firm ground of experience. The objection against it, from the conduct of the unbelieving Jews, has no experience whatever to rest upon.

95. The conduct of the Jews may be considered as a solitary fact in the history of the world, not from its being an exception to the general principles of human nature, but from its being an exhibition of human nature in singular circumstances. We have no experience to guide us in our opinion as to the probability of this conduct ; and nothing, therefore, that can impeach a testimony, which all experience in human affairs leads us to repose in as unquestionable. But after this testimony is admitted, we may submit to be enlightened by it ; and in the history which it gives us of the unbelieving Jews, it furnishes a curious fact as to the power of prejudice upon the human mind, and a valuable ac-

cession to what we before knew of the principles of our nature. It lays before us an exhibition of the human mind in a situation altogether unexampled, and furnishes us with the result of a singular experiment, if we may so call it, in the history of the species. We offer it as an interesting fact to the moral and intellectual philosopher, that a previous attachment may sway the mind even against the impression of a miracle; and those who believe not in the historical evidence which established the authority of Christ and of the apostles, would not believe, even though one rose from the dead.

96. We are inclined to think, that the argument has come down to us in the best possible form, and that it would have been enfeebled by that very circumstance, which the infidel demands as essential to its validity. Suppose for a moment, that we could give him what he wants, that all the priests and people of Judea were so borne down by the resistless evidence of miracles, as by one universal consent to become the disciples of the new religion. What interpretation might have been given to this unanimous movement in favour of Christianity? A very unfavourable one, we apprehend, to the authenticity of its evidences. Will the infidel say, that he has a higher respect for the credibility of those miracles which ushered in the dispensation of Moses, because they were exhibited in the face of a whole people, and gained their unexcepted submission to the laws and the ritual of Judaism? This new revolution would have received the same explanation. We would have heard of its being sanctioned by their prophecies, of its being agreeable to their prejudices, of its being supported by the countenance and encouragement of their priesthood, and that the jugglery of its miracles imposed upon all, because all were willing to be deceived by them. The actual form in which the history has come down presents us with an argument free of all these exceptions. We, in the first instance behold a number of proselytes, whose testimony to the facts of Christianity is approved of by what they lost and suffered in the maintenance of their faith; and we, in the second instance, behold a number of enemies, eager, vigilant, and exasperated at the progress of the new religion, who have not questioned the authenticity of our histories, and whose silence, as to the public and widely talked of miracles of Christ and his apostles, we have a right to interpret into the most triumphant of all testimonies.

97. The same process of reasoning is applicable to the cases of the Gentiles. Many adopted the new religion, and many rejected it. We may not be sure, if we can give an adequate explanation of the conduct of the latter, on the supposition that the evidences are true ; but we are perfectly sure, that we can give no adequate explanation of the conduct of the former, on the supposition that the evidences are false. For any thing we know, it is possible that the one party may have adhered to their former prejudices, in opposition to all the force and urgency of argument, which even an authentic miracle carries along with it. But we know that it is not possible that the other party should renounce these prejudices, and that too in the face of danger and persecution, unless the miracles had been authentic. So great is the difference betwixt the strength of the argument and the strength of the objection, that we count it fortunate for the merits of the cause, that the conversions to Christianity were partial. We, in this way, secure all the support which is derived from the inexplicable fact of the silence of its enemies, inexplicable on every supposition, but the undeniable evidence and certainty of the miracles. Had the Roman empire made a unanimous movement to the new religion, and all the authorities of the state lent their concurrence to it, there would have been a suspicion annexed to the whole history of the gospel, which cannot at present apply to it ; and from the collision of the opposite parties, the truth has come down to us in a far more unquestionable form than if no such collision had been excited.

98. The silence of Heathen and Jewish writers of that period, about the miracles of Christianity, has been much insisted upon by the enemies of our religion ; and has even excited something like a painful suspicion, in the breasts of those who are attached to its cause. Certain it is, that no ancient facts have come down to us, supported by a greater quantity of historical evidences, and better accompanied with all the circumstances which can confer credibility on that evidence. When we demand the testimony of Tacitus to the Christian miracles, we forget all the while that we can allege a multitude of much more decisive testimonies ; no less than eight cotemporary authors, and a train of succeeding writers, who follow one another with a closeness and a rapidity, of which there is no example in any other department of ancient history. We forget that the authenticity of these different writers, and their pretensions to credit, are founded

on considerations, perfectly the same in kind, though much stronger in degree, than what have been employed to establish the testimony of the most esteemed historians of former ages. For the history of the Gospel, we behold a series of testimonies, more continuous, and more firmly sustained, than there is any other example of in the whole compass of erudition. And to refuse this evidence, is a proof, that in this investigation, there is an aptitude in the human mind to abandon all ordinary principles, and to be carried away by the delusions which we have already insisted on.

99. But let us try the effect of that testimony which our antagonists demand. Tacitus has actually attested the existence of Jesus Christ ; the reality of such a personage ; his public execution under the administration of Pontius Pilate ; the temporary check which this gave to the progress of his religion ; its revival a short time after his death : its progress over the land of Judea, and to Rome itself, the metropolis of the empire ;—all this we have in a Roman historian ; and, in opposition to all established reasoning upon these subjects, it is by some more firmly confided in upon his testimony, than upon the numerous and concurring testimonies of nearer and cotemporary writers. But be this as it may, let us suppose that Tacitus had thrown one particular more into his testimony, and that his sentence had run thus, “ They had their denomination from Christus, who, in the reign of Tiberius, was put to death as a criminal by the procurator Pontius Pilate, *and who rose from the dead on the third day after his execution, and ascended into heaven.*” Does it not strike every body, that however true the last piece of information may be, and how ever well established by its proper historians, this is not the place where we can expect to find it ? If Tacitus did not believe the resurrection of our Saviour, (which is probably the case, as he never, in all likelihood, paid any attention to the evidence of a faith which he was led to regard, from the outset, as a pernicious superstition, and a mere modification of Judaism,) it is not to be supposed that such an assertion could ever have been made by him. If Tacitus did believe the resurrection of our Saviour, he gives us an example of what appears not to have been uncommon in these ages—he gives us an example of a man adhering to that system which interest and education recommended, in opposition to the evidence of a miracle which he admitted to be true. Still, even on this supposition, it is the most unlikely

thing in the world, that he would have admitted the fact of our Saviour's resurrection into his history. It is most improbable, that a testimony of this kind would have been given, even though the resurrection of Jesus Christ be admitted; and, therefore, the want of this testimony carries in it no argument that the resurrection is a falsehood. If, however, in opposition to all probability, this testimony had been given, it would have been appealed to as a most striking confirmation of the main fact of the evangelical history. It would have figured away in all our elementary treatises, and been referred to as a master argument in every exposition of the evidences of Christianity. Infidels would have been challenged to believe in it on the strength of their own favourite evidence, the evidence of a classical historian; and must have been at a loss how to dispose of this fact, when they saw an unbiassed heathen giving his round and unqualified testimony in its favour.

(To be continued.)

TRANSLATION OF ST. BASIL'S HOMILY "ON THE FAITH."

BY H. S. BOYD.

[St. Basil flourished towards the close of the fourth century, and is considered as one of the most learned, eloquent, and pious men of that age. He was the intimate friend of the celebrated Gregory Nazianzen. To those who are acquainted with the history of the Church it is well known that Basil was famous for his attachment to orthodoxy; that the genuineness of his faith was never questioned. "If, then, the sermons and treatises of all the other Fathers had perished, and those of Basil only had been preserved, we might still have been absolutely certain that his doctrines were the doctrines of the Church in his day."]

To meditate on God unceasingly is a righteous employment, and to a pious soul it never can bring satiety; but to discourse of God is arduous; for the intellect of man is surpassed by the grandeur of the subject, and his words are inadequate to the conceptions of his intellect. Since, then, our ideas are unequal to the majesty of the theme, and our words are inferior to the elevation of our ideas, does it not behove us to sit down in silence,

lest, by the poverty of our speech, the wonders of theology should be disgraced? The desire, indeed, of glorifying God is natural unto all who are endowed with reason, but all must alike be baffled who would worthily discourse concerning him. No one is so infatuated, no one so deceives himself, as to imagine that he can arrive at the highest summits of comprehension. In proportion as a man hath made advances towards this heavenly knowledge, will he perceive and feel his imbecility.

Such was Abraham, such was Moses, when they beheld the Deity, as far as a mortal could behold him; then, especially, did they account themselves as vile, the one declaring that he was but earth and ashes, the other saying he was slow and impotent of speech; he saw, he felt, he deplored the inefficiency of his tongue, which was unable to reach the sublimity of his ideas. But since, in this assembly, each ear is opened to receive theological instruction, and since no satiety accrues unto the church, even from continued hearing, it behoves us to discourse according to the measure of our ability.

I purpose to inquire, not how great God is, but how far he may be apprehended. What, though our eyes be unable to pierce through the regions of unbounded space, shall we refuse to contemplate that portion of the universe which is accessible to our view? Let us then by the tribute of our words, discharge some portion of the debt of piety; let not the greatness and the magnificence of the argument confound us in eternal silence. Not even the tongues of angels, whatever they may be,—not even the lips of the archangels,—not all the united voices of all the supra-mundane powers could worthily celebrate the smallest part, much less the whole of this stupendous subject. If thou desirest to speak of God, or to hear him spoken of, burst asunder the fetters of the body, and break from the thralldom of the senses; leave the earth behind thee, leave the ocean beneath thee, rise above this lowly atmosphere; escape the influence of the seasons; outstrip the march of time; regard not the beauteous fabric of the earth, but ascend above the firmament. Consider those resplendent orbs, those starry wonders, which blaze around thee, which astonish thee with their harmonious order, their stupendous bulk, the benefits they afford to man, their wondrous movements, their effulgence, their arrangement, their oppositions and conjunctions. Behold the milder lustre of the moon, and the more gorgeous glories of the sun. Having beheld them all, and having soared

above them all, with thy pure unclouded intellect, contemplate the intellectual beauties, the celestial armies, the chorus of the angels, the præfecture of the archangels, the glory of the potentates, the presidency of the thrones, the principalities, the powers, and the dominions. Having surveyed them all, having penetrated creation with a glance, upborne on the wings of intellect, continue thine aspiring flight, and contemplate the nature of Divinity. A nature, permanent, unchangeable, undeviating, uncompounded, and indivisible. A Being who dwells in splendour unapproachable; a potentate ineffable; a greatness uncircumscribable; a glory all irradiating; a goodness all desirable; a beauty indefinable; a beauty which is apprehended by the ravished soul, but which bids defiance to the powers of expression!

There, in unclouded majesty, are enthroned the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit; an independent nature; a regal domination; an unoriginated excellence. Behold the Father, the cause of all things, the source of being to the things which be, the origin of existence. From him proceeded the fountain of life, the wisdom, the power, the unvarying image of God, who is invisible. The Son, who was begotten by the Father, the living Word, he who is with God, and is God; essentially existing, not ascititious; subsisting before the ages, not afterwards engendered; the Son, and not the servant; the Maker, and not the work; the Creator and not the creature; he is every thing which the Father is. You will observe that I say, "the Father and the Son." Be careful to mark their peculiar distinctions. He therefore continuing to be the Son, is every thing which the Father is; according to that saying of our Lord, "Whatsoever the Father hath is mine;" for surely those things which are inherent, in the prototype must also belong unto the image.—We have beheld his glory, saith the evangelist, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father; that is, the glory, not of those wondrous powers, which were bestowed upon him by the munificence of God; but the glory of the Son, who, from the sameness of his nature, possessed the dignity of the paternal Godhead. To receive is common to all created natures, but to have the natural right of possession is the property of him who is the begotten Son. Since, then, the Son, by natural right, possesses whatever belongs unto the Father; and since the only begotten hath in himself the whole, not possessing any thing which is participated by another, we learn, from the very appellation of *the*

Son, that he is participant of the Father's nature; not having been made by a decree, but having beamed forth from the paternal essence, indivisibly and eternally conjoined unto the Father: his equal in excellency, his equal in power, the participator of his glory. Tell me, what is the Son but a seal and an image, representing the entire Father?

When we descend from his Divinity to his humanity, when we discourse of his manifestation in the flesh, to effect the redemption of the world; when we describe him saying, that he was sent forth, that he was unable to do any thing of himself, and had received a mandate, let not these things incline thee to detract from the Divinity of the only begotten Son. Let not that condescension which was occasioned by thy necessity, be brought forward to lessen the dignity of the Omnipotent. Understand, that his nature was such as became a God, and when you meet with any thing which is lowly and ignoble, refer it to the œconomy of redemption.—The œconomy of redemption!—Oh! if on this exhaustless subject we were now to attempt discoursing, we should be adding to our present argument an infinitude of ideas, and an infinity of words. We will, therefore, adhere to our proposition.

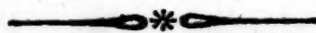
The soul, which is purified from material dross, and disengaged from terrene affections; the soul, which can leave behind it all created natures; which, like a fish emerging from the depths of ocean, can rise above its native element, can breathe celestial air, and swim on the pure waves of incorporeal existence; that soul will perceive the Spirit where it perceives the Father and the Son; it will see that the Spirit subsists in one common essence; that it is co-eternal, commensurate, and equipollent; possessing whatever they possess; goodness, righteousness, sanctity, and life. For the Scripture saith "Thy good Spirit." And again, "The righteous Spirit." And again, "The holy Spirit." The apostle says, The law of the Spirit of Life. Of these perfections, not one is acquired or adventitious; but, as to cast a heat is inseparable from fire, and to shine is inseparable from light, so also to sanctify and to give life can never be separate from the Spirit.

There exists the Spirit,—there in that blessed nature,—not reckoned with multitude, but contemplated in a Triad, enuntiated by unity, not comprehended in the class of entities.

As the Father is one, and the Son is one, so also is the Spirit ; but the ministering spirits arranged in their respective orders, indicate a multitude whose number transcends the powers of computation. Seek not amid created beings that which is above creation, nor bring down the sanctifier to the condition of the sanctified. This Spirit fills the angels, replenishes the archangels, sanctifies the powers, and gives existence to the universe. This Spirit, though distributed through all creation, though participated in various degrees and measures, is in nought diminished by the profusion of his bounties. He bestows on all the riches of his grace, and yet his treasure is unexhausted : for they who receive are abundantly replenished, and he who gives is not impoverished. As the sun, shining upon various bodies, and gilding them with various degrees of brightness, suffers not a diminution, so the Spirit diffuses over all his grace, yet endures, undiminished and undivided. He illuminates the minds of all with the knowledge of Deity ; he inspires prophets, he enlightens legislators, he makes the priesthood perfect, he strengthens monarchs, he establishes the righteous, he dignifies the prudent, he sheds abroad his graces, he bids the dead to live, he liberates those who had been bound, he adopts those who had been estranged. These things he operates by the regeneration which is from above. Does he find a tax-gatherer ? he constitutes him an evangelist. Does he meet with a fisherman ? he renders him a Divine. Does he behold a persecutor ? he sends him forth an apostle of nations, an herald of the faith, a vessel of election. By him are the weak invigorated, the poor are enshrined in wealth, the illiterate are rendered wiser than the wise. Paul was infirm in body, but by the exuberance of the Spirit his very garments extended health to the diseased. Peter also was subjected to corporeal infirmity, but through that spiritual grace which dwelt within him, the very shadow of his body expelled diseases. Peter and John were poor, for they had neither silver nor gold, but they bestowed health, which was more precious than gold, and more estimable than silver, for a lame man, though he had received the alms of many, was still a mendicant ; but when he had been cured by Peter, he ceased from begging, he leaped like an hart, and magnified his God. John was unacquainted with the wisdom of the world, but in the power of the Spirit he uttered words which no wisdom of man can fathom.—The Spirit is enthroned in heaven, but he pervades the earth, he

is every where present, and by no bounds is circumscribed. In each point of space he is altogether present, and yet he is altogether enthroned in heaven. Not as one who is subservient does he administer gifts, but of his own will he dispenses blessings; for, saith the Scripture, he distributes unto each according as it pleases him. He is sent forth, with reference to the œconomy of redemption, but with inherent might he operates.

Let us pray that he may be present to our souls, and may never fail us. Let us pray that he may be present through the grace of Christ our Lord, unto whom be ascribed the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.



BIOGRAPHY.



SHORT MEMOIR OF THE REV. JAMES ROGERS.

It seems that our beloved brother Rogers once commenced keeping a diary or journal, but did not proceed farther than to give a short account of his birth, education, conversion, and call to the ministry. From his manuscript papers, the following extract has been taken, which will, no doubt, be pleasing to his numerous friends, and the pious Christian.

“ I was born in James-City county, state of Virginia, 1769, of respectable parents. When I was about eighteen months old, my father died, and left me to the care of a tender mother, who paid strict attention to my morals while I was under her tuition. But at nine years of age it became necessary that I should be boarded out to school; where I was continued from year to year, boarding at different places, and in different families, (remote from my mother) until I had arrived to the age of sixteen; in which time I lost the good impressions made on my mind while under the instruction and direction of my mother. I was then bound out an apprentice in a town, where I contracted many wicked habits, and was driven far from God, by an acquaintance and association with a large circle of wicked youths: In which time it pleased God, by a stroke of his providence, to deprive me of my only remaining parent. The loss of my mother made serious impressions on my mind for some time; but the

circle in which I moved was unfavourable to religion, and I continued wandering in forbidden paths, with but little diminution. When the time of my apprenticeship expired, I contracted a more extensive acquaintance, and of course new theatres of vice were prepared, and entered into with avidity. At length I received a temporary check, by an unusual alarm in a ball-room, occasioned by a tremendous tempest of thunder, lightning and wind, which lasted about fifteen hours, and spread devastation over the surrounding neighbourhood. This alarm, though accompanied with solemn vows to heaven of reformation, was not that genuine repentance, which is essential to a radical change of heart, and thorough reformation of life. Sometime after this, I went to a Quarterly Meeting held by the Methodists: the preacher, on Saturday, took for his subject Hebrews vi. chap. 1 and 2 verses. He preached with so much zeal and animation, that he awakened such a deep concern in my mind for religion, as to induce me to go to the place where the preachers put up that night; and in watching their conversation and conduct, and finding all tended to religion and the concerns of another world, I was induced to believe they were the most holy people that I had ever seen. That night I asked the lady of the house, if she would solicit the preachers to permit me to go into Love-Feast the next morning, which she promised—but failed to do so. On the next day when I saw the people of God all go into the house, I felt as though I was secluded from them, and I was unable to restrain, or command my feelings; neither was I able to keep from being discovered; so I walked a distance off to a church, and went into the burying ground, where my father, mother, and only brother and sister, were mingling with their kindred element. I had reason to believe they were all gone to heaven, my father and mother having been professors of religion, and my brother and sister both died when small. I began to conclude that I should not only be separated from the people of God in the house, but from my dear relations who were gone to heaven. While these reflections were rushing on my mind, my feelings were indescribable.

“ I returned to the house; the doors were opened, and the preacher commenced preaching from Heb. vii. 25. “ *Wherefore, He is able also to save them, to the uttermost, that come unto God, by him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them.* ”—The power of the Lord, came down in such a manner, that

some cried aloud for mercy, and some shouted for joy of heart. I thought the preacher spoke as never man spake before.

"The next day, I went about fifteen miles to meeting, and the preacher spoke from Acts xvi. 31. While he was preaching my heart felt as if it would break, and I could no more command my body than my feelings. If I had not been sitting, I believe I should have fallen to the ground. The preacher then took his leave of us, and I felt willing to go with him to the very ends of the earth. A prayer-meeting was then appointed in the neighbourhood by the class-leader : as soon as I got there the meeting began, and my heart seemed as though it would burst. My constant cry was, "*Lord save, or I perish.*" In my agony an old sister came up, and began to encourage me to pray, and began to pray for me herself ; and while she was praying, the burden of sin was removed, and I arose full of joy and peace. If I had been in possession of ten thousand tongues, I would have employed them all in praising God. I wanted to let all the world know what God had done for me. I felt and knew that Jesus died for me. At the same time the power of God was manifested in such a manner, that fifteen souls professed to be converted to God. For several hours my soul was so filled with love, that I could say with an apostle, "*I live ; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.*" The next day we had meeting again, and we had a glorious shower of mercy indeed. I thought doubts were for ever gone. I was so filled with divine goodness that I scarcely knew where I was. Two days after we had another prayer-meeting, and a great revival broke out. In six weeks, more than one hundred souls were happily converted to God. My soul felt all alive. I soon began to feel so much for the salvation of sinners, that I could not rest without warning them to flee the wrath to come. I exercised my talent sometimes in exhortation, and the Lord blessed my feeble efforts, in the conversion of many souls."

Here his private diary closes.

He was admitted on trial as a travelling preacher in the Methodist Episcopal Church, in the year 1791, and received his first appointment to the Gloucester circuit. In 1792, Orange circuit. In 1793 he had charge of Amelia circuit, having been graduated to the office of Deacon in the church. In 1794, Sussex circuit. In 1795, he was graduated to Elders orders, and appointed to Edisto circuit, South Carolina, where he laboured with much

zeal, spending part of his time in Charleston, South-Carolina. In 1796, Washington circuit. In 1797, Camden circuit, Virginia and N. Carolina. In 1798, he was appointed to the Newbern district as Presiding Elder. In 1799, he travelled the same district, but considerably enlarged, reaching from the Blue-ridge to the Atlantic Ocean. In 1800, he was re-appointed to Sussex circuit, Virginia, where he married, and at the ensuing Conference of 1801, he received a location, and settled in the County of Sussex, Virginia. In all the above stations, this faithful servant of Jesus Christ laboured acceptably and profitably. His ideas of the doctrines of the gospel were clear and comprehensive, and his love for souls and zeal for the truth led him to illustrate those doctrines with perspicuity and enforce them with special energy. The salvation of all, in any way committed to his charge, was the great end at which he aimed; and to the accomplishment of this end he directed all his studies and labours. Success attended his diligent exertions; and many, through his instrumentality, were made the witnesses of justifying, comforting, and sanctifying grace.

From the time he located until he died, he shone both as a Christian minister, and a member of civil society. There it was, he gave a practical comment on the doctrines he had preached for many years, paying tribute to whom tribute was due, and honour to whom honour was due; shewing all due respect to the constituted authorities of his country, and yielding obedience to the laws of God. As a husband, he obeyed the apostolic injunction, Ephesians v. 25, and was exemplary indeed. And like Abraham, he commanded his children and household. In a word, such was the diligence and promptitude with which he discharged every duty that arose out of all the relations he sustained, as *husband, parent, minister, and citizen*, that he was revered and loved by all who knew him. Although, according to the laws of human nature, men seldom experience any considerable vicissitude, without feeling a corresponding shock; yet this man of God, (after filling for years a station which secluded him from the common cares of life) entered upon a domestic life, with the charge of a family, in the support of which he laboured indefatigably with his own hands, without any manifest diminution of his steadfastness of Faith, fervor of spirit, and zeal for the glory of God. He retained such strong desires for the happiness of mankind, that he studied to be industrious and

œconomical, that he might redeem the more time to devote to the work of the ministry. Until his last illness and death, he continued to be a faithful, laborious, and zealous preacher in the Vineyard of the Lord. He was a plain, practical and experimental preacher. Repentance, Faith, Holiness of heart, and life; the joys of the righteous, and miseries of the wicked, were the subjects of his frequent addresses. His voice was loud, musical and clear; and listening multitudes have heard him with pleasure, and to great profit. He was correct in doctrine, sound in judgment, eloquent and impressive in his manner.

He was truly attached to the doctrines and discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church. He was zealous for the itinerant plan and its promotion, and was a father to the travelling preachers. He never appeared better pleased or more cheerful, than when he had one or more of these servants, of the Lord under his hospitable roof. He was an example worthy the imitation of the religious world, both preachers and people. "*Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace.*" His last illness was short and flattering, but severe indeed: but he never was heard to utter a murmuring word. He talked of death with calmness, and without dismay. Just before he expired, (having been for several days propped up in his bed to prevent suffocation by discharge from the lungs) he said to the by-standers, "*Lay me down and let me go,*" and immediately breathed his last. As he lived so he died. He laid down his cross to take up his crown. His memory should not perish, but be kept sacred amidst the ravages of the desolating hand of Time. His friends and brethren should record his sermons and examples in their minds deeper than the engraving in a rock with an iron pen.

E. D.

By a note in the London Methodist Magazine we were authorised to expect the sequel of the account of the Buddhist Priest in the first numbers of that work for the present year. But although four numbers have been received, no further notice is given. We presume that through some unavoidable occurrence the documents have been delayed in their passage from India. What remains will appear as soon as it is received from London.

SCRIPTURE ILLUSTRATED.

ILLUSTRATION OF MATTHEW XVI. 27.

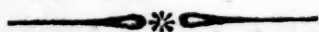
From an eminent Author.

THE Lord Jesus, to encourage his disciples to the practice of the difficult duties of daily self-denial, taking up the cross and following him, the necessity of which he frequently inculcated; and to arm them against all the scoffs, reproaches, insults, and persecutions which he forewarned them they should meet with in the profession of his religion; frequently set before them his second coming, the strict process of the day of final judgment, and the glorious rewards he should then confer on his faithful servants. *The Son of man*, says he, *shall come*, not in his present low and contemned state, but most magnificently arrayed both in his own glory and in his Father's; shall come, not attended by twelve weak disciples, but surrounded with numberless hosts of mighty angels. *He shall come in his own glory*, the glory peculiar to him as God-man; probably the majesty and splendour of his glorified body, a visible representation of which he exhibited in the transfiguration about a week after this discourse was delivered. He shall come also *in the glory of the Father*, augustly arrayed with the inaccessible light wherein God dwells, (1 Tim. vi. 16—see Acts i. 11,) and which, darting through, and enlightening all space with its ineffable brightness, shall make even the sun to disappear. Withal, to render his advent to judge the world the more grand, he will come *with the holy angels*, attended by the whole host, (Matt. xxv. 31,) a vast train, ready to execute his commands. In this majesty, *the Lord* shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God, (1 Thess. iv. 16,) making heaven, earth, and hell to resound. The dead of all countries and times hear their tremendous call. Hark! the living, filled with joy, exult at the approach of God; or, seized with inexpressible terror, send up doleful cries; and are all *changed in a moment in the twinkling of an eye*. Behold the dead press forth from their graves, following each other in close procession! The earth seems quick, and the sea gives up its dead. Mark the beauty,

the boldness, and the gladness of some, springing up to honour; but the ghastly countenances, the trembling, and the despair of others, *arising to shame and everlasting contempt!* See how amazed and terrified they look! with what vehemence they wish the extinction of their being! Fain would they fly, but cannot. Impelled by a force strong as necessity, they hasten to the place of judgment. As they advance, the sight of the tribunal from afar strikes new terror; they come on in the deepest silence, and gather round the throne by thousands and thousands. In the mean time the angels, having brought up their bands from the uttermost parts of the earth, fly round the numberless multitude, singing melodiously with loud voices, for joy that the day of general retribution is come, when vice shall be thrown down from its high usurpation, virtue exalted from its debasement to its superior station, the intricacies of Providence unravelled, the perfections of God vindicated, the church of God purchased with blood, cleared of them that do iniquity, and of every thing that offendeth, and established impeccable for ever. Ps. lxxviii. 1, *Let God arise, let his enemies be scattered. As smoke is driven away, so drive them away. As wax melteth before the fire, so let the wicked perish at the presence of God. But let the righteous be glad, let them rejoice before God, yea, let them exceedingly rejoice.* Rev. xviii. 8, *For strong is the Lord God who judgeth.* And now the Son of Man appears on the throne of his glory, and all nations, princes, warriors, nobles, the rich, the poor, all entirely, stripped of their train and attendance; and every external distinction stand naked and equal before him, silently waiting to be sentenced to their unchangeable state. And every individual is filled with an awful consciousness, that he in particular is the object of the observation of Almighty God, manifest in his sight, and actually under his eye, so that there is not one single person concealed in the immensity of the crowd. The Judge, who can be biassed by no bribes, softened by no subtle insinuations, imposed upon by no feigned excuses, having been himself privy to the most secret actions of each, needs no evidence, but distinguishes them with an unerring certainty. He speaks! *Come from among them my people, that ye receive not of their plagues.* They separate. They feel their judge within them, and hasten to their proper places; the righteous on the one hand of the throne, and the wicked on the other; not so much as one of the wicked daring to join himself with the just. Here the righteous, most

beautiful with the brightness of virtue, stand serene in their looks, and full of hope, at the bar of God, a glad company; whilst the wicked, confounded at the remembrance of their lives, and terrified with the thought of what is to come, hang down their heads, inwardly cursing the day of their birth, and wishing a thousand and a thousand times that the rocks would fall on them and the mountains cover them. But in vain. For there is no escaping, nor appealing from this tribunal. Behold, with mercy shining in his countenance, and mild majesty, the King invites the righteous to take possession of the kingdom prepared for them from the creation of the world. But with angry frowns he drives the wicked away into punishment that shall have no end, no refreshment, no alleviation, *everlasting punishment!* O the rejoicing! O the lamenting! The triumphant shouting of ascending saints, caught up in the clouds to be ever with the Lord! The horror, the despair, the hideous shriekings of the damned, when they see hell gaping, hear the devils roaring, and feel the unspeakable torment of an awakened conscience. Now they bitterly cry for death, but death flies from them. Now they envy the righteous, and gladly would be such, but all too late! Lo, the Son of God bows his head, the signal for his servants, the heavens and the earth to depart, their work being at an end. See! with a terrible thundering noise the heavens pass away, the elements melt with fervent heat, and the earth, and all the works that be therein, are burnt up! The frame of nature dissolves! Earth, seas, and skies, all vanish together, making way for the new heaven and the new earth. It appears! The happy land of promise, formed by the hand of God, large, beautiful, and pleasant, a fit habitation for his favourite people, and long expected by them as their country. Here all the righteous, great and small, are assembled, making one vast blessed society, even the kingdom and city of God. Here God manifests himself in a peculiar manner to his servants, and wipes away all tears from off their faces, and adorns them with the beauties of immortality, glorious to behold. Here they drink fulness of joys from the chrystal river proceeding out of the throne of God, and of the Lamb, and eat of the tree of life. And *there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain!* But every one, happy in himself, imparts the blessing to his fellows; for mutual love warms every breast; love like that which subsists between the Father and the Son, mutual confer-

ence on the sublimest subjects refreshes every spirit with the divine repasts of wisdom; and joys flowing from the tenderest friendships, fixed on the stable foundation of an immovable virtue, gladden every heart. All the servants of God serve him in perfect holiness, see his face, feel transports of joy, and by the reflection of his glory, shine as the sun in the firmament for ever and ever! *And there shall be no night there, and they need no candle, neither the light of the sun, for the Lord God giveth them light, and they reign for ever and ever!* Happy day! happy place! and happy people! O blest hope of joining that glorious society! *All the servants of God shall serve him and see his face.* Serve God, and see his face! What an immensity of felicity is here! Imagination faints with the fatigue of stretching itself, to comprehend the vast, the immeasurable thought!



THE ATTRIBUTES OF GOD DISPLAYED.



THE WONDERS OF VISION.

THAT we might be able to perceive external objects, it is necessary that a number of rays should proceed from them, and fall upon our eyes. These rays, which enter the eye, pass through the *Cornea*, where they are refracted, and passing on to the *Christaline Humour*, they are still more so. After having been sufficiently refracted, and then reunited in their passage through the *Vitreous Humour*, they paint on the *Retina*, the images of exterior objects, and define them with the utmost clearness and precision. The *optic* nerve which terminates in the *Retina*, conveys these sensations to the soul, and excites in it, perceptions and ideas, conformed to the impressions which these exterior objects have made upon the brain.

What we have said concerning vision, shews it to be one of the principal wonders of human nature, and that it well deserves to be more particularly considered.

The images of exterior objects are painted in an *inverted* form upon the *Retina*; nevertheless we see every thing *upright*, and in its true situation. How is it that the *greatest* objects are delineated in our eye in extreme miniature; and yet we perceive

every thing in its real size? How does it happen, that when from the top of a tower we perceive many thousands of houses below us in a large city, that each is painted so exactly in our eye, on a surface scarcely three times as large as the head of an ordinary pin? So many millions of rays coming through a small aperture, are reunited in the *Retina* which covers the bottom of the eye, without the least confusion, though they preserve among themselves the same order with the parts of the objects from which they proceeded. Again; let a person from the top of a lofty mast view a fleet in the open sea, when all the sails of each ship are set; let him view the sea itself, how many thousands of waves does he discover! Now each of these reflects an immensity of rays upon the eye, which notwithstanding its smallness, distinctly receives the whole.

Finally, let a person go to the top of a mountain in a clear day, and let him view the country for several miles round. Every tree, every blade of grass, sends rays of light to the eyes, without which it would be impossible for us to discover that continued green colour, which we see in every part of the landscape below us. But, is it not still more astonishing, that we do not see the objects double; and that having *two* eyes each object appears to us *single*!

But, here is another subject for admiration. These objects which we see, are not only visible to *us*. We have already been astonished at the number of rays which they send to such a small space as the pupil of the eye. But, they send as many to every similar quantum of space in the whole surrounding atmosphere; it is because of this, that withersoever we walk, new rays replace the former, and render the same objects visible which we discovered previous to our changing our place. All these rays are already in existence, and only wait to be received by our eyes: but all the rays of light are not alike efficacious; besides those already mentioned, there are others beyond calculation, which being much weaker, are effaced by the splendour of the first; but which are nevertheless, ready to perform the functions of the former, when necessity requires. If we pierce a leaf of paper with a pin, and look through the hole, which is much less than the pupil of our eye, we notwithstanding, discover the same objects, though they may appear to us much smaller.

But who properly reflects on this subject? The habit of discerning objects as often as we open our eyes causes us to con-

sider this operation, as a thing exceedingly simple, and easy to be comprehended. Yet, we are very far from being able to explain the manner in which we see these objects. We know that images are formed on the *Retina*, and we know also that all the parts of the eye contribute to their formation: but this is not sufficient: for the eye can have no conception of what passes in itself: it is necessary therefore, that the impressions which these rays make upon the eye, should be propagated to the brain; and for this purpose, the rays of light paint the image of the objects upon the *Retina* which is a tissue of nerves which have their origin in the brain: but we cannot possibly describe what passes there; because we have no perfect knowledge, either of the nature of the brain, nor the use of its different parts.

After all, we understand enough to cause us to acknowledge the greatness of the divine wisdom, power and goodness. What remains inscrutable to our understanding is the work of a Sovereign Intelligence which manifests itself every where, as well within as without us; and which is always accompanied with a goodness which is without bounds. O my God! may my soul incessantly acknowledge thy gracious wisdom! and may my lips declare the wonders of thy power; wonders, which though they surpass my conception, are to me ever advantageous and salutary!



THE GRACE OF GOD MANIFESTED.



A SHORT MEMOIR OF MRS. ANNA NICKERSON,

Late Wife of Mr. Warren Nickerson, of Orrington in the County of Penobscot, District of Maine, by E. Mudge, in a Letter to the Rev. J. Soule.

Boston, March 25th, 1818.

REV'D AND DEAR SIR,

THE subject of the following memoir has been known to yourself and many of your brethren in the ministry, and I believe has been generally respected for her christian piety (as being truly a mother in Israel) by all who have known her. As she was respected in life, so was she truly lamented in death, and

to many her memory is precious. To them therefore it would be very gratifying to have the following short account made public through the medium of the Methodist Magazine, if you shall think it worthy of a place in its pages.

Mrs. Anna Nickerson was born in Gorham, in Massachusetts, April 13th, 1766. Her father's name was Austin Alden. He was a man of exemplary piety; for many years a deacon in the Congregational Church, but manifested a truly christian and catholic spirit—a man of real intelligence and ability. He died in full assurance of faith, on the 26th of March, 1800, in the 75th year of his age. Mrs. Nickerson's mother died May 16th, 1780, shouting victory, and expressing her full and certain hope of immortal glory through Jesus Christ. Mrs. Nickerson was the youngest of four children. She was married to Mr. Warren Nickerson in November, 1785, and removed to the town of Orrington in December following, where she spent the remainder of her days, and finished her course with joy.

The salutary influence of the pious instruction and good examples of her parents, was felt in a good degree in restraining and directing the natural flow of her youthful passions. She was often visited with serious impressions, yet they were generally too much neglected amidst the pursuits and vicissitudes of youthful pleasure. Although the writer has often heard the deceased speak of this part of her life, he does not now recollect any thing specially remarkable, except that her religious impressions were attended with distressing ideas of being one of the wretched number of those who were supposed to be reprobated to everlasting misery. It was about the year 1797, that she was brought to see herself a lost and undone sinner.

The dispensation of God's providence in taking away her oldest child, the strivings of his spirit, and the preaching of the word, all concurred to call up and fix her attention on the things which related to her soul's salvation. It was now that her views of herself as a sinner became more just, and consequently more distressing. She lamented the neglect of paternal instruction, and her inattention to former calls and invitations in her youthful days. The thoughts of reprobation—and of having sinned away the day of grace, and many others, which led to despondency, became more afflicting and distressing than ever.

She often wished to open her mind to somebody on these subjects, but there were few around her at that day who had experienced religion, or made it the subject of conversation. But the observations and remarks of an old Mr. D.—(then a neighbour of her's) helped her much in the above particulars. O how ought christians to watch for opportunities like this to help tempted, tried and afflicted souls. This Mrs. Nickerson never forgot afterwards, but always made it a point of duty to speak to any who came in her way, who appeared to be under trials; yea, she often made christian visits on purpose to sympathize with, advise, encourage and pray with the afflicted. Br. Jesse Lee visited Penobscot River about this time; his preaching was blessed to many. Br. J. Hall was the first Methodist preacher who made any tarry in those parts. It was by his preaching and conversation that sister Nickerson first had her mind enlightened into clear and proper views of the gospel method of salvation by faith in Jesus Christ. Although her sense of sin, wretchedness, and ruin increased, she was brought to apprehend Christ as an all-sufficient Saviour, and to cast her guilty and polluted soul on him for pardon and salvation. Christ appeared for her, and set her soul at liberty from guilt, condemnation and distress, and filled her with peace, and love, and joy in the Holy Ghost.

From this time the doctrine of reprobation and its concomitants no more troubled her. Her views of the gospel method of salvation became enlarged, liberal and scriptural. She received the witness of the spirit of adoption, and immediately began to speak of the things which she experienced to her friends and neighbours, exhorting and encouraging them to come to Christ, that they might experience the joys of this salvation which she had found in her blessed Redeemer.

It was in the autumn of this year that the writer of this first went to Orrington, and became acquainted with her. She was then rejoicing in God, and much engaged in praying for a revival of his gracious work. On the Christmas evening of this year Mr. N. her dear husband, was made partaker of her joys, by being brought to experience an evidence of pardon and acceptance through Christ; from which blessed period they have mutually drawn together in the delightful and easy yoke of their Redeemer, till separated by death. At different subsequent pe-

riods several of their children and many of their friends and neighbours have been hopefully converted to God.

She was among the first who united in the Methodist Church in that place (and this was the first christian Church of any religious denomination ever formed in the county, or for many miles around in that part of the country). Our beloved sister N. has uniformly and constantly maintained her first confidence in God. The next year after her conversion she experienced an uncommon degree of the sanctifying power of divine grace, a sense of which she retained, and of which she gave a uniform testimony by her holy life and godly conversation, to the day of her death.

It is not to be expected that every one who may possess an equal degree of grace, should be noticed in the manner she was among her christian friends. Few have equal natural talents and gifts to appear to that advantage. She possessed a good natural understanding, strong reasoning powers of mind, and a peculiar gift to speak of her religious views and experience. Yet it has been frequently observed by those who knew her, that she spoke with a peculiar unction, which was the fruit of an intimate acquaintance with the scriptures, and a close communion with God in his ordinances. Indeed, the ordinances of God were her delight. O ye survivors of our mother in Israel, I call you to witness how often you have heard her express her delight in the means of grace. How often have you heard her say that she never attended her class-meetings—her prayer meetings—her love-feasts and her sacraments, in vain. For twenty years has the writer had the happiness of meeting with you and our beloved departed sister in the use of the means of grace, in which we have often witnessed the presence and power of our divine master to comfort and bless us,—to him be all the glory. Mrs. N. was one of those who always appeared to have the cause of God lay near her heart. As she was always desiring and praying for a revival, she was among the first to encourage the hearts and strengthen the hands of the preachers who laboured on the circuit;—and indeed were it proper I might with much pleasure mention the names of a number more in that place who were like minded to encourage the Lord's servants in their arduous labours. Although Mrs. N. delighted in public ordinances and the social means of grace, her religion was not confined to these. How much she cared for her family, and how ardently she laboured for their good, is known and recollected by

them. When her husband was gone, it was her constant custom to attend family devotions. The writer of this memoir has frequently found her with her Bible in her hand, and her children around her, listening to her admonitions, instructions, and encouragements. It was her constant practice to read a portion of the Holy Scriptures in the morning; and her family well knew her private devotions were not neglected. She would grieve and weep if any professor of religion stepped aside from the path of duty, or grew cold and remiss in the ways of religion. "I have often witnessed (said one of her children) with pain and anxiety, her falling tears when about her family concerns, which led me to enquire the cause, when she would break out in some such language as this: "O how can I help weeping to see souls decline from the ways of religion, and turn back to the world, and wound the precious cause of the Redeemer." I can well remember when I was but a child, her earnest prayers and intercessions at a throne of grace for her tender offspring, that their minds might be early impressed with a sense of the importance of religion, the worth of their souls, and the necessity of being prepared to live to the honour of God here, and to live with him hereafter. She often observed days of fasting and prayer, in which she was more particularly engaged for a revival of religion, for the prosperity and happiness of the Church. These often proved seasons of refreshment to her own soul; so that from the abundance of her heart, her mouth spake of what she felt and enjoyed in her private devotions. "I never (continued the same child) can be sufficiently thankful for her continued watchfulness over me. Whenever she saw me or any of the children step out of the way, she never failed to give gentle and salutary reproof; particularly for the neglect of duty."

(To be concluded in the next.)

MISCELLANEOUS.

OF VOLITION.

From Smith's Lectures on moral and political Philosophy, delivered in the College of New-Jersey.

THE will is that power of the soul, and volition the exercise of that power which is the immediate cause of action in man. Propensities, affections, and other active principles in our nature, may stimulate the mind to action, and thus prove motives to the exercise of its voluntary powers. These internal emotions, therefore, and the various external objects which tend to incite them, may be regarded as primary and remote causes of our actions; but the immediate and proximate cause, is volition.

The nature of the will is understood, as far as we understand any of the acts or powers of our own minds, only by consciousness. The plainest and most unlettered man perfectly conceives the meaning of these phrases, *I will*, and *I will not*. And the nature of this faculty, as of every other power of the soul, is understood only in its acts.

The principal enquiry on this subject which merits your attention, relates to *the freedom of the will*, as it is generally expressed; or, as it ought, perhaps, to be more definitely stated, *the freedom of the mind in her volitions*.—It is an enquiry on which volumes have been written by the most acute and distinguished metaphysicians, and moralists. And, as they have embraced directly contradictory opinions upon the question, or have come in their conclusions to opposite results, it is probable that there is some peculiar subtlety in the subject, or that they have set out in the discussion on erroneous principles, or embarrassed it by the introduction of the peculiar tenets of their respective sects of philosophy or religion.—One party maintain not only that the will is free in acting, but that it determines its own acts. Another party contend that the will is, in all cases, determined by motives; that it cannot act in any other way; and that, therefore, it must necessarily be determined by the strongest motive, or the last motive in the view of the mind at the time of acting.—That is, laying aside all consideration of the interior energy

or power of the soul over its own acts, the will is, by a separate mechanism, subjected to the impulse and control of motives, as the water wheel, to use Dr. Priestly's own analogy, is to the force and gravity of the fluid that turns it round.

One would think, indeed, that it is a question of the utmost simplicity, and the most obvious solution. It is a question strictly of experience; and to experience alone we ought to appeal for its decision. Every man is conscious to himself that he acts freely; and that, in all ordinary cases, when he is not under the impulse of some violent passion, or under the commanding influence of some inveterate habit, he has it in his power to pursue a directly contrary course of action, from that to which he is invited by the present predominant motive. But philosophers have opposed speculation to fact; and commencing with an erroneous principle, that the acts of the will must be determined solely, and irresistibly by the motives before it, as they are presented in the order of nature, they have been led to conclusions contrary to nature and experience. We seem to be free, they say, yet, we are only borne along by a powerful stream, to which we make no resistance because it concurs with our inclinations; but which, otherwise, it would be vain to attempt to resist.

In the beginning, permit me to observe, that the decision of this question involves considerations of no small importance to morals. The doctrine of necessity, when pursued to its ultimate consequences, appears to destroy all moral distinctions, and to take away merit from virtue, and demerit from vice. I am aware that notwithstanding the errors of speculation, nature will often find means to enforce the practical dictates of truth and reason. Many of those philosophers who have most strenuously contended to bind the moral world under the chain of a speculative necessity, not only obey the laws of virtue themselves, but, would reprehend any departure from them in others, no less severely than the advocates of a rational liberty. It is, however, too much to be apprehended that the greater part of the modern disciples of this school, have intended to annihilate the true distinction between vice and virtue, except so far as it may be made a convenient political engine of public order. On the regulation of individual manners it has certainly an unfavourable aspect. Those writers who have embraced the system of necessity, connecting it at the same time with the principles of religion, have endeavoured, except Dr. Priestly, and a few others, to state a dis-

inction between physical and moral necessity. After all the explanations, however, which have been given of these phrases, they appear to amount only to this, that the one is the necessity of matter, the other, the necessity of mind. The consequences of the doctrine on the merit and demerit of virtue and vice, seem not to have been, clearly at least, guarded against by the friends of the latter phraseology. If by moral necessity were intended to be expressed the extreme difficulty of changing, or correcting old and inveterate habits, we could admit it as a justifiable figure of speech. But if it be he meant to indicate a real necessity, in vicious men of acting immorally, resulting from a depraved disposition of the heart, which is natural, constitutional, incurable.

I see not how the term, so circumstanced, at all relieves the consequences, as to the accountability or guilt of the agent imputable to the principal of physical necessity. To say that the course of immoral action being voluntary, is therefore criminal, is merely an abuse of words, when the will itself, in the language of these writers, is infused by the author of our being; at best is the necessary result of the moral constitution of man.*

The controversies concerning liberty and necessity have been extended to so great a length, that it would be impossible, in a course of lectures like the present, to give even a concise abridgment which would be intelligible, and satisfactory, of the various reasonings which have been held on one side and on the other. They have, besides, been so mingled with the doctrines of religion, converting the simplicity of the gospel into a system of abstruse metaphysics, that it is become almost dangerous to touch a subject on which each party claims a merit for detecting a latent heterodoxy under the most guarded and philosophic expression of truth. We often see, moreover, speculations so bold, and hear a language so presumptuous, with regard to the power,

* It will be easily perceived that, in these reflections, there is an oblique reference to the extravagant, not to say atheistical tenets of some metaphysical divines. I mean not, however, to enter into any religious discussion. The depravity of human nature, which the scriptures teach, and which experience proves, I am very far from denying, but would strenuously assert. But can any moral necessity be attached to man's condition of depravity, which was not attached to his original state of innocence and perfection? Or do these writers forget their own principle that man has been placed in a new state of trial, under a dispensation of grace? But can any trial be imposed on a subject bound under the chains of an *invincible* necessity, though softened under the deceptive name of *moral*?

liberty and prescience of the Deity, as are sufficient to deter us from a subject, simple and obvious in itself, but puzzled by a vain philosophy, and no less vain theology, in which men, in proportion to their ignorance, affect to be acquainted with the inscrutable mysteries of the divine nature, and the way in which infinite wisdom is present with the human will.

All that I propose upon the subject is to state in a few plain propositions, and in as clear and comprehensive a manner as I am able, as far as human duty is concerned, what I conceive to be the truth upon this question, which has been rendered obscure only in consequence of too much subtlety.

And, in the first place, it is of importance to correct an error in language, which has probably contributed, in some measure, to involve the question of *liberty and necessity*, in that obscurity with which it has been so remarkably surrounded.—The *freedom of the will*, is a phrase which has been familiarly employed by all parties, and the propriety of which seems not to have been questioned by any. But volition being only an act of the mind, liberty cannot be so properly predicated of it, as of the mind which exercises that act.—When we speak of liberty, or necessity, as predicable of the *will*, there are only two forms of discourse which the advocates of the respective sides of this question employ;—the one, that the *will* determines itself;—the other, that it is solely determined by motives,—both equally unphilosophical and false.

If we ask how the will forms any determination? If the question is not an absurdity, because the will is itself the determination of the mind, we would be obliged to answer by an identical proposition, that it is by an act of volition. If then we admit that the will determines itself, it can only be, if the phrase have any meaning, by a previous act of volition. And if we enquire by what is this act determined? we must in the same manner answer, by one still prior—which would lead us through an infinite series of volitions to determine one free act.

(To be continued.)

RELIGIOUS AND MISSIONARY INTELLIGENCE.

EXTRACT FROM THE REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE FOR THE MANAGEMENT OF THE MISSIONS UNDER THE DIRECTION OF THE METHODIST CONFERENCES.

British Colonies in the West Indies.—The state of the West India mission, so interesting to religion and humanity, has been a subject of no inconsiderable anxiety to the Committee during the last year. Its successes, through the divine blessing, still continue, and every year presents opportunities for the enlargement of its ministrations to the moral wants of the pagan slaves of our colonies. But in some of the islands it has had to contend with more than ordinary opposition; and the missionaries, almost in every place, have been placed in circumstances of suspicion and hazard, through the active measures of the enemies of missions, and the effect of those publications, which, either in utter ignorance of the case, or in despite of all contrary evidence, have held up their labours as fraught with danger and mischief to the interests of the colonies. If the probable result of this is, that the character of that mission will be better known and appreciated, and even this opposition shall "*turn out to the furtherance of the Gospel*," in those dark places of the British empire, it will call for new acknowledgements to him who "*maketh the wrath of man to praise him*," and against whom there is no knowledge or counsel.

The activity of several publications to misrepresent the operations of missions to the colonies in general, and to the Wesleyan missions in particular, claimed the earliest attention of the Committee, after they entered upon the duties assigned them by the Conference. Means were taken to collect evidence, both from those persons in England who had formerly been employed as missionaries in the West Indies; from the missionaries at that time employed there; and from other persons unconnected with the mission as to the neglected condition of the negroes, the conduct and labours of the missionaries, and the effects produced on the moral state and habits of the slaves to whom they had devoted their ministry. On these subjects the Committee themselves

had no doubts to remove, but it was thought necessary, that attacks so formal and frequent should be met by explicit and direct evidence. The result of these inquiries was given to the public, and the principal points which the Committee conceive to have been thus established, are—the gross ignorance and vicious manners of the pagan negro population of the British Islands; their utterly neglected state, as to religious instruction, in most cases by all, except Methodist missionaries; and the salutary effects produced by religious instruction upon their dispositions, morals, general comfort, industry, and contentedness. Numerous facts in proof of these particulars are stated, whilst not a single proveable fact is adduced in support of the injurious allegations, boldly and wantonly made by those whose object appears to be to shut up the slave in his pagan darkness, and to deny to him, in both worlds, the consolations and hopes of a religion, which they themselves, nevertheless, strangely profess. This investigation has also shown, that there are in the West Indies a great number of respectable white inhabitants, owners of slaves, proprietors of estates, or connected with them, who have given great countenance and support to the mission, from their own experience of its beneficial effects upon the negro population; and many of them have furnished the Committee with their written testimonies on this subject; documents which have not as yet been made public, but may be published at a future time, as additional corroborations of the evidence in favour of the mission, should circumstances render it necessary. In some of the islands, the only effects produced by the inflammatory and illiberal writings of the anti-mission party at home, has been to excite inquiries, not before made, into the doctrines and the characters of the missionaries, which, in not a few cases, have issued in obtaining for them additional encouragement. In others, this party “have had their reward.” Without shaking the attachment of the former friends of the mission in any of the islands, without producing any effect upon the minds of dispassionate and observing men, they have, however given occasion to those who, without any inquiry, suffer their suspicions to be awakened by every passing shadow: and to those who appear to act only from motives of hostility to religion itself, to call for laws, in some instances greatly restrictive of the freedom of religious worship and the exertions of missionaries, and in others wholly obstructive of them. To these causes jointly may be attributed

the message from the Council of St. Vincent's to the House of Assembly, in May, 1816, recommending embarrassing enactments as to Methodist and other missionaries ; but which, it appears, was happily passed over in the last session, leaving the mission there still unfettered. But the Committee deeply regret to state, that notwithstanding the facts which have from time to time been exhibited in proof of the excellent effects resulting from the instruction of the negroes ; and the increased number of friends which the mission has been acquiring among the respectable white inhabitants of the colonies, laws have been passed by the Jamaica Legislature, and the Legislature of the Bahama Islands, against certain clauses of which it has been thought necessary to petition the British Government, whose tolerant spirit, and regard to the religious interests of the colonies, supports the confidence, that from every law restrictive of religious liberty, and opposed to the pious design of communicating Christianity to the pagan population of the West Indies, the Royal assent will be withheld.

The power of suppressing all religious assemblies, under the undefined name of unlawful meetings, which the clauses objected to by the Committee in the Jamaica Act vest in the hands of magistrates, the Committee are happy to state, have not been hitherto actually employed against the mission there ; but the state of the societies in the Bahama islands demands equally the commiseration and the prayers of all who know, in this favoured country, the value of religious freedom and worship. By one act, which, however, is suspended till the Royal pleasure be known, missionaries are only to be permitted to exercise their functions under conditions, with which none of them can safely comply ; whilst a Police Act is in immediate and strict operation, by which all meetings after sun-set and before sun-rise, that is, before six in the morning, and after six in the evening, are prohibited under severe penalties ; a measure which not only utterly deprives many of the slaves of the instruction afforded them on week days, but in many places of all instruction whatever, the missionaries being unable to visit many of them except the week evenings only. Many strong testimonials in favour of the conduct of the missionaries there, now in possession of the Committee, show how utterly unprovoked these arbitrary and persecuting measures have been on the part either of the mis-

sionaries, or of the religious slaves in our societies in the Bahama Islands.

In Demerara and Trinidad, the missionaries are placed in circumstances, sometimes vexatious and troublesome, and at others difficult and obstructive of their pious exertions. In the latter especially, the regulations of the local government prohibit the missionary there, in open contravention of the laws of toleration, from administering the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, or performing baptism or burial, and limit his performance of divine service, to three times a week, including Sunday, a case which is now under the attention of the Committee; but in the midst of these instances of intolerant or mistaken opposition, it will be the highest satisfaction to the friends of the West India mission, as it is to the Committee, that in so many of the islands, and those also where the mission has been the longest established, and where it is best known, the work proceeds without opposition; that in every island it has warm and active friends: and that it has through the past year, been crowned with great and encouraging success.

The following extracts from the minutes of the West India District Meetings will shew the present state of the mission in the islands respectively.

JAMAICA DISTRICT.—“In *Kingston* our prospects are truly pleasing. We have enlarged our chapel, but it is still far too small. Could we raise another as large, in a convenient part of this populous city, we are persuaded it would be filled with attentive hearers. The word of the Lord has free course, and is evidently glorified in the conversion of immortal souls. Great peace and harmony exist in our Zion. We meet with no opposition from the civil power.”

“In *Spanish Town* our cause is in a flourishing condition, and many are thirsting for the blessings of redemption. Mr. Ratcliffe has laboured here with great acceptance since the 20th of January. The society, which had decreased since the last general statement, has received an addition of sixteen members, respectable free people of colour. The congregation is large and deeply serious. We have lately purchased a valuable house with suitable premises, and are fitting up a neat chapel and dwelling house. The zeal and christian benevolence which our friends have manifested in helping us on this occasion, have made a deep impression on our minds, and greatly strengthened the sen-

timent we have long felt, that this place will become a very respectable and important missionary station."

Morant Bay.—"In this circuit Truth is carrying on her conquests. Mr. Wiggins obtained a licence for this place on the 2d of October ult. and has been labouring there with success since that period. On the Sabbath mornings the congregations are large and attentive, and the preaching by candle-light is well attended by the white inhabitants, and the free brown and black people."

Grateful Hill.—"In this circuit, though the societies are small, yet we have cause to believe they are truly pious, and are earnestly contending for the faith once delivered to the saints; and had they been favoured with the constant labours of a missionary, doubtless their increase would have been very considerable."

Montego Bay.—"Many years ago our much respected brother Fish united about sixty persons in society; many of them are yet alive, and manifest an ardent desire for the re-appointment of a missionary among them. Mr. Shipman has received every encouragement from some of the first characters in that neighbourhood to commence the work: and we are unanimously of opinion, that this appointment, if sanctioned by the Conference, will open, in that remote part of the island, a wide and effectual door for the spread of genuine Christianity."

At *Falmouth* we have similar prospects, and are strenuously urged by a respectable gentleman, a member of our society, to begin the work, and moreover we beg leave to add, that Mr. Shipman has received direct encouragement from one of the first political characters in the island to the same effect."

The numbers in society are,

	Whites.	Coloured, &c.	Total.
Kingston	22	2662	2684
Spanish Town	1	76	77
Morant Bay	2	1244	1246
Grateful Hill		144	144
Montego Bay			
Falmouth			
<i>Total in Jamaica</i>	25	4126	4151

ANTIGUA DISTRICT.—*Antigua*.—"In this island the cause of religion continues to prosper; many have been convinced of sin, and converted to God; and we have reason to believe that our societies are increasing in faith and love, and pressing on to eternal glory."

St. Kitts.—"In the course of last year we have been under the necessity of expelling many disorderly members; but have every reason to conclude that the church is in a good state."

Nevis.—"The work of God has been rather upon the decline during the last year. We have lost about 119 members; 28 of these have left the world for eternity, several of whom have died happy in the Lord: of the rest, some of them have been expelled, and others have been weary in well doing, and have left us; yet, many are growing in grace."

St. Bartholomew's.—"The work of God is in a good state, though the society has decreased. The cause of this has been emigration from the island through want of business; but of those who remain, many stand fast in the faith."

Tortola.—"The work of God has prospered: several have found redemption in the blood of Christ, the forgiveness of sins; and many are earnestly seeking after holiness. The societies are more established, and the preaching of the word is generally attended with the divine blessing."

Dominica.—"In the course of the last year much good has been done through the instrumentality of the word: many backsliders have been reclaimed; old professors reanimated, and sinners have been induced to seek redemption in the blood of the Lamb. Our prospects are flattering, and we appear to have a footing unprecedented in this colony."

St. Vincent.—"Our numbers are not so large as the last year; but we are happy to say, that real religion is increased: our congregations are large and attentive."

"From *Barbadoes* and *Grenada* we have no accounts."

Demarara.—"The work of the Lord is in a prosperous state: our numbers are increasing daily; many are advancing in the divine life, and our prospects at present are very promising."

St. Eustatius.—"The congregations are increased during the last year: the society is in a good state, and there is reason to believe the word will continue to prosper."

	Whites.	Coloured & Blacks.	Total.
Antigua - -	25	3552	3577
St. Kitts - -	33	2552	2585
St. Eustatius - -	7	313	320
Nevis - -	19	1183	1202
St. Bartholomew's	14	447	461
Anguila - -	10	140	150
Tortola - -	67	1664	1731
Dominica - -	4	633	637
St. Vincent - -	16	2760	2776
Barbadoes, no return			
Grenada, no return			
Trinidad - -	9	267	276
Demerara - -	9	956	965
<i>Total in Antig. Dist.</i>	213	14,467	14,680

(To be continued.)

OBITUARY.

DEATH OF THE REV. JAMES ROGERS.

DIED in Sussex County, Virginia, Sept. 19, 1817, JAMES ROGERS, for many years a useful minister in the Methodist Episcopal Church. The following letter from a Brother in the Ministry, in answer to the request of a Committee appointed to collect useful materials for publication, will furnish a new example of the power and excellency of religion, both in life and in death.

"DEAR BROTHER.—You have requested me to give you some account of the affliction and death of that great and good man of God, JAMES ROGERS. First, permit me to say something respecting his life. I have been intimately acquainted with Mr. ROGERS, for sixteen years. And when I consider with what dignity he filled every sta-

tion in which he acted; I can truly say, his equal I have seldom seen, his superior never have I known. I saw him only once in the time of his last sickness. His complaint was strange and distressing, but still he bore it with Christian fortitude and patience. A few days after I left him, I received the melancholy news of his death, with a request from his weeping companion to preach his funeral sermon, according to his desire before he died. The notice was short, (he having died on Friday, and his funeral was preached the Sabbath following) but yet the congregation was very large. The time was truly solemn, and though he is gone to rest, yet he lives in the remembrance of thousands."

W. HUBBARD.

POETRY.

SPREAD OF THE GOSPEL.

On reading a late account of the prevalence of Christianity, in the Island of Otaheite.

The time has gone by, when oppression and Error,
Like the mist on the mountain, envelop'd the
world;
The time has gone by, when the demon of terror,
Leagu'd with wild superstition, his banner unfurl'd.
Oh Christians, rejoice! the Idols are falling,
The darkness of midnight gives place to the
dawn;
The voice of the *heathen* on Jesus is calling,
And joy hails triumphant the gospel's bright
morn.
Thou dear Otaheite, sweetest isle of the Ocean,
The star of the East has illumin'd thy shore,
Thy vallies now echo with songs of devotion,
And thy Rulers fall prostrate to Idols no more.*
Sweet Isle of the South, thou art favor'd of Heaven,
Thy clime is delightful, thy skies are serene,
To thee, has the choicest of blessings been given,
Thy bread-fruits are sweet, and thy vallies are
green.

But chief, Otaheite, is the gift of the Saviour,
Whose praises now echo, thy vallies among;
Rejoice, Otaheite, rejoice in his favour,
And raise to thy Jesus, a loud choral song.
Rejoice, Otaheite, thy Idols are banish'd,
The daylight has dawn'd, and the darkness is
o'er,
Rejoice, Otaheite, thy *Morais* have vanish'd,
Rejoice, Otaheite, and thy Saviour adore.
Oh Jesus ride on, and speed the glad hour,
When lands now in darkness shall own thy blest
sway;
When the nations of Earth shall acknowledge thy
power,
When Kings shall adore thee, and princes obey.

CAROLINE MATILDA.

* *Vide Letter of Pomare, King of Otaheite to the English Missionaries.*

EFFUSION OF THE HEART.

Oh God create my heart anew,
Bid unbelief and fear depart,
Let holy, sanctifying dew,
Descend, and cleanse my longing heart.
Father, I wait thy will to prove,
Thy sanctifying power to see;
To triumph in thy perfect love,
And all my powers devote to thee.
Oh let me hear thy cheering voice,
Pronounce me, Saviour, wholly thine.

Then in thy strength will I rejoice,
And all my soul to thee resign.
By Jesus' last expiring groan,
Who suffer'd, bled, and died for me,
Oh! take away my heart of stone,
And let me find my all in thee.
Thou wilt—I feel the quick'ning power,
Thine everlasting love is mine,
Thou art my life, my strength, my tower,
And I, my God, am wholly thine.

CAROLINE MATILDA.

THE ROSE WITHOUT A THORN.

All earthly good still blends itself with harm;
Roses have thorns; a storm succeeds the calm;
Joys have their sorrows, laughter has its tears;
Sweets have their bitter drops, and hopes their
fears,
Day has its night, the sun its gloomy cloud,
The dimpled smile its sigh, and life its shroud.
One rose, however, without a thorn is here,
Its beauty unalloy'd without compeer:

Thee, flower, I hail! of Eden's blest retreats,
The only one to tell of Eden's sweets.
Fair emblem then of heaven's high bliss where
reign
Joys without sorrow, pleasures without pain;
Smiles without sighs, a day that knows no night,
A sun that fears no cloud t' eclipse its light
Love's sparkling eye is never dimm'd with tears;
And peace immortal reigns unmix'd with fears.